

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
February 1980

Senate's Plan to Reform CIA Fails to Ease Scholars' Fears

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WASHINGTON

The Central Intelligence Agency would be prohibited from using U. S. universities as cover for its covert operations under a new charter for the agency proposed in the Senate last week.

Although the measure would impose some new restrictions on C.I.A. operations, it also would free the agency from other restraints—a move that some scholars and students fear could endanger the integrity of some academic research.

Perhaps the most controversial part of the bill, S 2284, is one that would exempt the C.I.A. from the Freedom of Information Act, a law that gives journalists, scholars, and other interested persons access to government documents.

'Voluntary Contacts' Permitted

The bill also would continue the controversial policy of allowing "voluntary contacts" and "voluntary exchange of information" between individual faculty members and intelligence agents.

Introduction of the new intelligence charter, the first in 33 years, came just after the American Association of University Professors wrote the White House expressing its continuing concern over revelations of C.I.A. involvement in possibly illegal operations on university campuses.

The proposals for reform "do not address the problems" that colleges and universities have faced in the past with C.I.A. intrusion, said Alfred D. Sumberg, the A.A.U.P.'s director of government relations.

In 1976, a Senate intelligence committee, headed by Sen. Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, reported that the C.I.A. had been using several hundred university scholars to write intelligence propaganda and to provide information on overseas intelligence operations.

More recently, newspaper investigations of C.I.A. activities during the 1960's and 1970's turned up instances of campus spying on student protesters and civil-rights workers and of efforts to use university researchers—often unwittingly—in mind-control experiments.

'Mockery of Reform'

Mr. Sumberg said his organization's concerns remained substantially the same as they were four years ago, when the association passed a resolution expressing concern about "any initiative to involve academics in covert intelligence operations under the guise of academic research."

Thirty-five other groups—including the United States Student Association and the Association for Arab American University Graduates—wrote to President Carter following his State of the Union address last month, in which he called for a loosening of restraints on the activities of U. S. intelligence agencies.

"Such actions," the groups said, "would make a mockery of your stated commitment to intelligence reform."

Earlier this month, the Campaign for Political Rights, a Washington-based clearing-house on intelligence activities, drafted a letter to be sent to the Senate and House intelligence committees objecting specifically to the provisions in the reform bill that would exempt the C.I.A. from the Freedom of Information Act.

"Because of the central role which the C.I.A. has played in this country's foreign relations in the post-World War II period, its files are an important resource for historians, political scientists, and others," the draft said.

"C.I.A. documents released under the [Freedom of Information Act] have contributed to a substantial and growing body of serious historical and journalistic works," the letter added.

Fate of Reforms Unclear

How the reforms will fare on Capitol Hill is unclear.

Three years in the making, the proposed National Intelligence Act of 1980 was introduced by some powerful lawmakers: Senators Walter D. Huddleston, Democrat of Kentucky, and Charles McC. Mathias, Jr., Republican of Maryland, the senior members of the intelligence committee's Subcommittee on Charters and Guidelines. Joining them were Senators Barry M. Goldwater, Republican

of Arizona, and Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana.

In a letter to the panel on February 8, President Carter said "substantial agreement" had been reached between the White House and the Senate committee on the provisions in the proposed charter, despite the White House's earlier plans to draft its own version of the reform bill.

In the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the takeover of the U. S. embassy in Iran, the Carter Administration and many lawmakers, particularly in the House of Representatives, were said to favor the removal of more restrictions on the intelligence community than the Huddleston bill would permit.

Among the issues to be settled during hearings on the bill later this month are how many Congressional committees should have jurisdiction over intelligence matters (the C.I.A. now reports to seven committees) and whether or not those committees should be notified in advance of major covert operations. University representatives are expected to express their opposition to covert activities on campuses.

The fate of the new charter is complicated by the fact that strong bipartisan support has grown recently for a less radical C.I.A.-reform measure introduced earlier by Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York.

The Moynihan bill, S 2216, is more narrowly focused on removing "unwarranted restraints" on the intelligence community and does not address itself to many of the issues that the charter raises.

Bill to Govern FBI

Another bill, expected to be introduced shortly in the Senate, would govern the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other domestic intelligence operations. Although it may have some effect on universities, many campus representatives say they are not interested in the measure because they feel their institutions have not been the target of F.B.I. probes since the civil-rights demonstrations and anti-war protests died down in the mid-1970's.

"But you just don't know," said an A.A.U.P. official. "The thing about covert operations or investigations is